



# Senegal

Couched between the arid desert lands of the north and lush tropical forests in the south, Senegal boasts a stunning array of sights, sounds and flavours. The capital Dakar alone hands you the country in a capsule. Perched on the tip of a beach-lined peninsula, this dizzying city is composed elegance and street hustle all rolled into one. The busy streets, vibrant markets and glittering nightlife will easily draw you into their relentless rhythm, but the escape route is always open – be it to the meditative calm of the historical Île de Gorée or the golden sands of Yoff and N'Gor. And if Dakar's sensory overload really gets too much, architecturally beautiful Saint-Louis, the first French settlement in West Africa, boasts a vibrant urban culture without the inner-city bustle.

Most visitors head to Senegal for its beaches, and for good reason. North and south of Dakar, wide strips of white sand invite swimming and sunbathing, whether in the built-up resort zones, where a lazy day at the beach can be followed by a cocktail trail at night, or in one of the coast's charming fishing villages, the beaches of which are dotted with hundreds of colourful wooden pirogues. At the deltas of the Casamance and Saloum Rivers, the coastline is broken up into a maze of thick mangroves, tiny creeks, wide lagoons and shimmering plains. A pirogue trip through these striking zones reveals hundreds of bird species, from the gleaming wings of tiny kingfishers to the proud poise of pink flamingos. Whether you want to mingle with the trendsetters of urban Africa, or be alone with your thoughts and the sounds of nature – Senegal is the place to be.

## FAST FACTS

- **Area** 197,000 sq km
- **ATMs** In all major towns
- **Borders** Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali and Mauritania; all borders open from dawn to dusk
- **Budget** US\$40 to US\$60 a day
- **Capital** Dakar
- **Languages** French, Wolof, Malinké, Pulaar, Diola
- **Money** West African CFA; US\$1 = CFA498
- **Population** 11.1 million
- **Seasons** Dry (December-March), hot (March-May), rainy season (June-November)
- **Telephone** Country code ☎ 221; international access code ☎ 00
- **Time** GMT/UTC
- **Visa** Required by all except nationals of Canada, the EU, Ecowas (Economic Community of West African States), Israel, Japan, Norway, South Africa and the USA



## HIGHLIGHTS

- **Dakar's markets** (p483) Soak up the colour, culture and chaos of Dakar's bustling markets.
- **Saint-Louis** (p484) Take a stroll through the historical city, accompanied by the sounds of live jazz.
- **Île de Gorée** (p484) Contemplate history and breathe in the atmosphere of this ancient slaving station and peaceful island.
- **Parc National du Niokolo-Koba** (p488) Try your luck at lion-spotting in Senegal's biggest national park.
- **Casamance** (p490) Lounge at Senegal's best beaches or hike through lush landscapes in Senegal's most beautiful region.

## CLIMATE & WHEN TO GO

Senegal's main tourist season is from November to February, mostly during the dry, 'cool' season, when Dakar's average daytime maximums are around 24°C (75°F). Most music festivals take place in December and between March and June.

During the wet months from July to late September some national parks are inaccessible or even closed, but it's also the time everything is green and beautiful, and many hotels reduce their prices by up to 50%.

## ITINERARIES

- **One Week** Spend a couple of days tasting the urban life of Dakar (p477), and take a day trip to Île de Gorée (p484). Head north to visit the historical town of Saint-Louis (p484), the Parc National des Oiseaux du Djoudj (p487) and Parc National de la Langue de Barbarie (p487).
- **Two Weeks** Start as for the one-week itinerary, then head from Dakar south to the Petite Côte. Visit the fishing village of Mbour (p489) and, if you like your beach life local, the seashell town Joal-Fadiout (p489), or try Saly (p489) if you're more at home in a holiday resort zone. Trace the coastal road beyond to Palmarin (p489), the stunning entry port to the region of the Siné-Saloum Delta, then head via Ndangane (p489) and Mar Lodj (p489) for Toubakouta (p490), one of the prettiest spots in the Delta.

## HISTORY

Senegal was part of the Ghana Empire in the 8th century and the Djolof kingdom, in the

## HOW MUCH?

- **Soft drink** US\$0.60
- **Newspaper** US\$0.40
- **Sandwich** US\$2
- **French bread** US\$0.30
- **One hour internet** US\$0.60

## LONELY PLANET INDEX

- **1L petrol** US\$1.10 (and rising)
- **1L bottled water** US\$1
- **Bottle of Flag/Julbrew** US\$0.60
- **Souvenir T-shirt** US\$9
- **Shwarma** US\$1.50

area between the Senegal River and modern-day Dakar, during the 13th and 14th centuries. In the early 16th century, Portuguese traders made contact with coastal kingdoms, and became the first in a long line of 'interested' foreigners: the British, French and Dutch soon followed, jostling for control of strategic points where slaves bound for the Americas could be collected. Saint-Louis was secured by the French in 1659, and the whole of Senegal by the end of the 19th century. Dakar was built as the administrative centre, and as early as 1848 Senegal had a (French) deputy in the French parliament. It wasn't until 1914 that the first African deputy, Blaise Diagne, was elected.

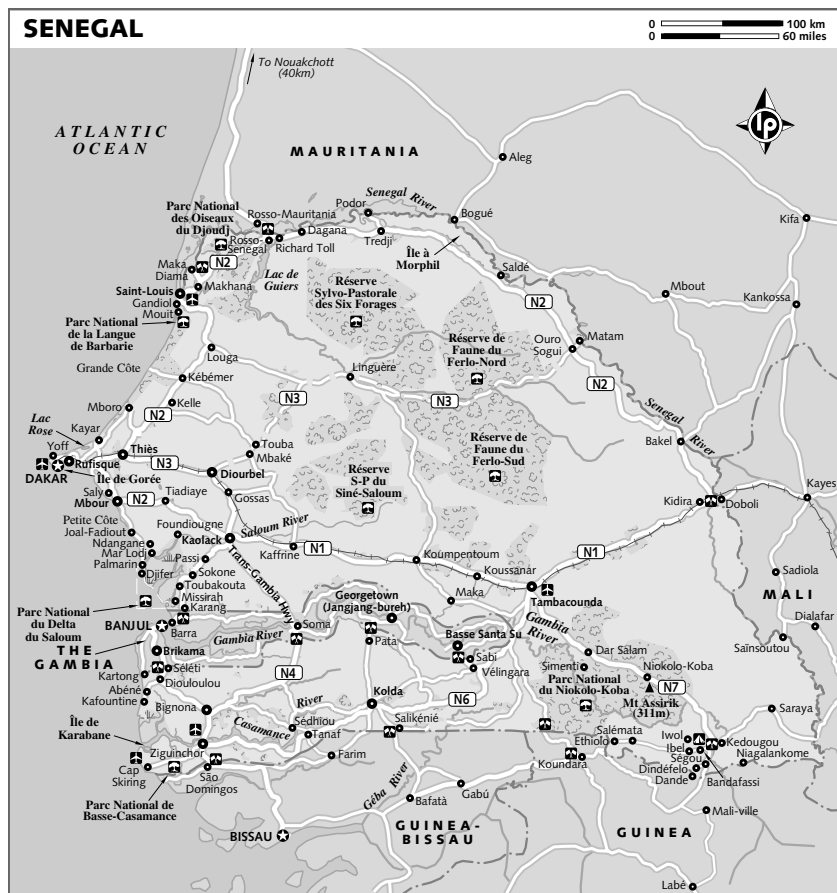
In the run-up to independence in 1960, Senegal joined French Sudan to form the Federation of Mali. The federation lasted all of two months, and Senegal subsequently became a republic under the presidency of Léopold Sédar Senghor, a socialist and poet of international stature who commanded respect domestically and abroad. His economic management, however, didn't match his way with words. At the end of 1980, he voluntarily stepped down and was replaced by Abdou Diouf, who soon faced a string of mounting crises.

The early 1980s saw the start of an ongoing separatist rebellion in the southern region of Casamance. Seven years later a minor incident on the Mauritanian border led to riots and deportations in both countries, the three-year suspension of diplomatic relations, and hundreds of casualties.

In 1993 more violence, in Casamance and elsewhere, followed Diouf's election to a third term. Negotiations with rebel separatists resulted in a ceasefire in July that collapsed three years later. Tensions mounted in other parts of the country as a result of austerity measures introduced by the government, such as utilities privatisations and the halving of the value of the CFA franc, designed to put an end to the long-term shrinking of the economy. In February 1994 the government, made increasingly paranoid by civil unrest, arrested opposition leader Abdoulaye Wade on charges of sedition; however, it could barely contain the reaction to his incarceration and he was released three months later.

In the presidential elections of March 2000, Abdoulaye Wade, after 25 years as opposition leader, was finally given his chance in a free and fair election, having gathered large parts of the population behind his hope-giving *sopi* (change) campaign. Diouf respected the will of the people and peacefully relinquished power. Senegalese democracy was further strengthened the following year, when a new constitution was approved, allowing the formation of opposition parties and consolidating the prime minister's role.

In 2002 the country was shaken by a huge tragedy when the MS *Joola*, the ferry connecting Dakar and the Casamance capital Ziguinchor, capsized due to dangerous overloading, leaving almost 2000 people dead.



## Senegal Today

Despite Wade's efforts in stabilising the economy, and his (so far) successful appeasement of the Casamance rebellion through a 2004 peace deal, most people's lives haven't particularly improved. Wade's controversial decision to arrest former prime minister Idrissa Seck in 2005 on accusations of undermining state security and embezzling funds sent the country into a flurry of political debate. In February 2006 Seck was released and all charges were dropped, but the political debates have remained heated ever since. For the vast majority of Senegalese, life is still a struggle, and though there's a feeling that the current government has failed its people, there seem few real alternatives.

## CULTURE

'A man with a mouth is never lost,' goes a popular Wolof saying, and the Senegalese are indeed rarely lost, at least not for words. Conversation is the key to local culture, and the key to conversation is a great sense of humour and a quick-witted tongue. The Senegalese love talking, teasing and testing you out, and the better you slide into the conversational game, the easier you'll get around. The words flow endlessly, the storytellers are always a step ahead of their audience, and the truth is rarely allowed to get in the way of a good story.

Personal life-stories in Senegal tend to be brewed from a mix of traditional values, global influences, Muslim faith and family integration. More than 90% of the population is Muslim, and many of them belong to one of the Sufi brotherhoods that dominate religious life in Senegal. The most important brotherhood is that of the Mourides, founded by Cheikh Amadou Bamba. The *marabouts* who lead these brotherhoods play a central role in social life and wield enormous political and economic power (possibly the power to make or break the country's leaders). They are also called on as healers, advisers and casters of spells to help people in their struggle ahead.

## PEOPLE

The dominant ethnic group is the Wolof (about 43% of the population), whose language is also the country's lingua franca. Smaller groups include the Fula (around 24%), the Tukolor, a sub-branch of the Fula, who make up 10%, the Serer (14%) and the

Diola (5%). Senegal's population is young: around 42% people are under 14 years old. The greatest population density is around the urban areas of Dakar.

## ARTS

The doyen of Senegalese cinema is Ousmane Sembène. Other famous directors include the illustrious Djibril Diop Mambety and the younger Joseph Kamaka Gaye, whose acclaimed work *Karmen Gei* sets the classic story of Carmen in a Senegalese context.

Senegal is one of Africa's most musical nations, and names such as Youssou N'Dour and Baaba Maal are famous worldwide. The beat that moves the nation is *mbalax*. Created from a mixture of Cuban music (hugely popular in the 1960s) and traditional, fiery *sabar* drumming in the late 1970s, *mbalax* was made famous by Youssou N'Dour, still the unrivalled leader of the scene.

Senegal also has one of the most exciting hip-hop scenes in Africa, with leading names being Positive Black Soul, Daara J, and Pee Froiss.

Senegal has a vibrant contemporary arts scene and is particularly renowned for the unique art of *sous-verre* (reverse-glass painting). Outstanding artisans include Moussa Sakho, Babacar Lô, Mbida and Gora Mbengue.

## ENVIRONMENT

Senegal consists mainly of flat plains, cut by three major rivers: the Senegal River in the north, which forms the border with Mauritania; the Gambia River in the middle, which is surrounded by the small country of The Gambia; and the Casamance River in the south, which gives its name to the surrounding Casamance area, a fertile zone of forest and farmland.

The best place to see large animals in Senegal is in Parc National du Niokolo-Koba.

The national parks of the coastal regions, including the Siné-Saloum Delta, the Parc National de la Langue de Barbarie and the Parc National des Oiseaux du Djoudj, are noted for their spectacular birdlife.

Overfishing, deforestation and coastal erosion, caused by uncontrolled illegal sand mining, are the main environmental issues the country faces.

Throughout the north of the country, deforestation has greatly contributed to increasing desertification.

In the fight against overfishing, the community-run Aire Marine Protégée de Bam-boung is a notable project. It is showing an impressive rate of success in replenishing the species, but only covers a small area off the coast.

## FOOD & DRINK

Senegal's national dish is the *tiéboudienne* (rice cooked in a thick tomato sauce and served with fried fish and vegetables). Also typical are *yassa poulet* or *poisson yassa* (marinated and grilled chicken or fish) and *mafé* (peanut-based stew).

Local drinks include *bissap*, made from sorrel flowers, and *bouyi*, made from the fruits of the baobab. The best local beer is Flag.

# DAKAR

## pop 2 million

If Dakar only could, it would burst its beaches and lead its cacophonous parade of furious drumbeats, screeching traffic, exuberant nightlife, market shouting, street hustling and boundless creativity in ever-wider circles across the country. This is a feverish city that brims with life. It's got some of the best nightclubs, live venues, and film, music and arts festivals in the whole of West Africa. You'll rarely have a boring day in Dakar, and the city charges only an occasional fee in unwanted hassle and sly con-jobs – easily negotiated once you've learnt a few tricks.

## ORIENTATION

The expansive Place de l'Indépendance is the city's heart. From here, major streets lead in all directions, including Ave Leopold Senghor and Ave Pompidou, which leads west to Marché Sandaga. From here, Ave du Président Lamine Guéye goes north to Gare Routière Pompiers. To the north of the city centre lie the suburbs Point E, Fann, Mermoz and Ouakam, all of which have good bars and restaurants. The airport is 19km north of the town centre, and north of there are Yoff and N'Gor, with Dakar's best beaches.

## Maps

By far the best city map is the colourful, detailed one by **Editions Laure Kane** (www.editionslaurekane.com; US\$7), available in most souvenir shops and hotels.

## INFORMATION

### Bookshops

**Librairie Aux Quatre Vents** (Map p482; ☎ 821 8083; Rue Félix Faure)

**Librairie Clairafrique** (Map p478; ☎ 864 4429; University Campus, Ave Cheikh Anta Diop)

### Cultural Centres

**British Council** (Map p478; ☎ 869 2700; Rue AAB-68, Amitié Zone A&B) Has a good library and cute café.

**l'Institut Français Léopold Sédar Senghor** (Map p482; ☎ 823 0320; 89 Rue Gomis) A vital inner-city stop with a leafy café and lively cultural programme.

### Internet Access

There are many internet cafés and wi-fi is spreading fast; the network at Novotel (p481) is free (purchase something at the bar).

**Espace Sentoo** (Map p482; Place de l'Indépendance; per hr US\$0.60; ☎ 9.30am-8pm) One of the best internet cafés.

### Media

Free listings magazines such *Dakar Tam Tam* containing details of restaurants and travel agencies are available at most hotels, travel agencies and restaurants. The cultural magazine 221 (CFA500) has the best entertainment listings and information on music, sports and other events around the country.

### Medical Services

**Hôpital Principal** (Map p480; ☎ 839 5050; Ave Léopold Senghor) Has the best emergency service.

Pharmacies are plentiful in Dakar; 24-hour openings rotate.

**Pharmacie Guigon** (Map p482; ☎ 823 0333; Ave du Président Lamine Guéye; ☎ 9am-11pm) One of the best-stocked options.

### Money

An ATM-equipped bank is never far in Dakar. Place de l'Indépendance has the best choice. Visa is the most widely accepted card.

**BICIS** (Map p482; ☎ 839 0390; Place de l'Indépendance)

**CBAO** (Map p482; ☎ 839 9696; Place de l'Indépendance)

**SGBS** (Map p482; ☎ 839 5500; 19 Ave Léopold Senghor)

### Post & Telephone

**Espace Sentoo** (Map p482; Place de l'Indépendance; ☎ 9.30am-8pm) Has good telephone facilities.

**Main post office** (Map p482; Blvd el Haji Djily Mbaye;

☎ 7am-7pm Mon-Fri, 8am-5pm Sat)

**Post office** (Map p482; Ave Pompidou) Has telephone facilities.

## Travel Agencies

Dakar has plenty of travel agencies. Good ones include:

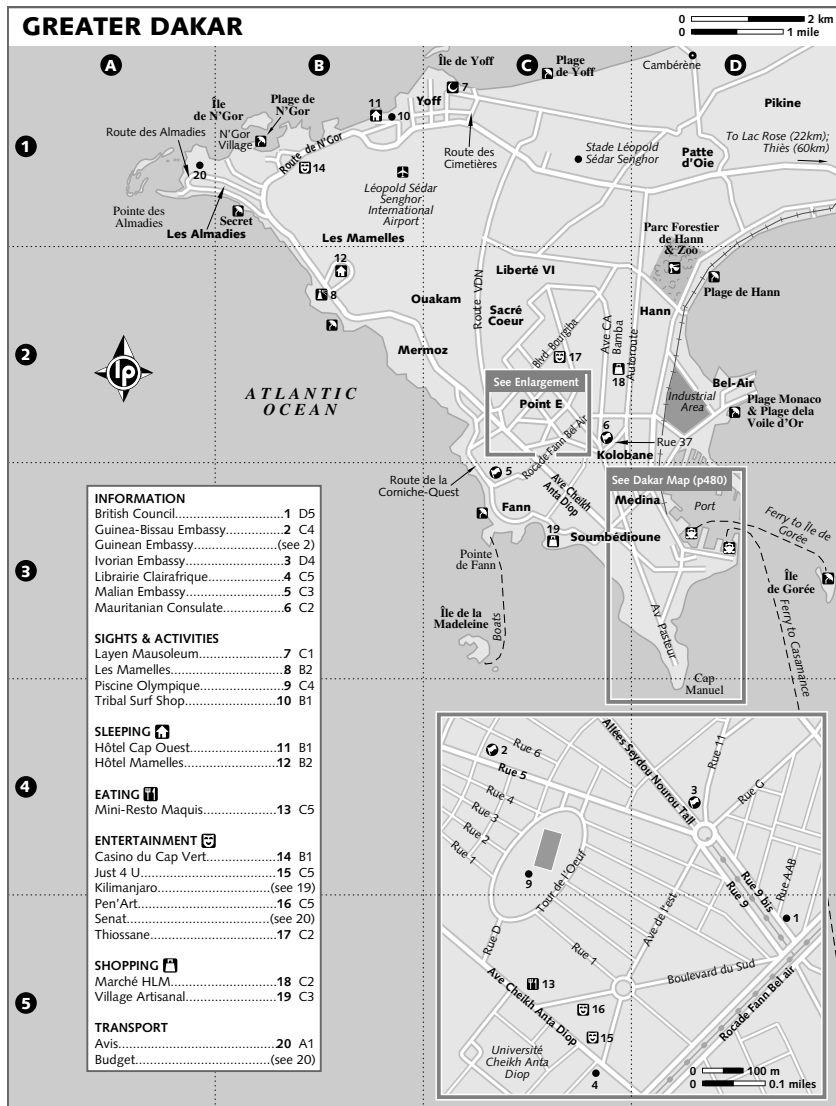
**Dakar Voyages** (Map p482; ☎ 823 3704; dakarvoyages@sentoosn; 28 Rue Assane Ndoye) Tends to have the best ticket deals.

**Pain de Singe** (Map p480; ☎ 824 2484; paindesinge@arc.sn; l'Océanum, Route de la Corniche-Est)

Unbeatable for ecotourism and off-the-beaten-track circuits.

**Sahel Découverte Bassari** (Map p482; ☎ 842 8751; carresahel@sentoosn; 7 Rue Masclary) Has good tours around Senegal and caters for English, French and Spanish speakers.

**Senegalair Voyages** (Map p482; ☎ 821 3425; senegalair@sentoosn; Ave Léopold Senghor) Great for finding flights to other African destinations.



## DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Dakar's notorious street hustlers and hard-to-shake-off traders do a pretty good job at turning any walk around town into mild punishment, particularly for women. Stride purposefully on, and throw in a brief 'bakhna' ('it's OK') and they'll eventually leave you alone. Violent crime is rare, but pickpocketing and muggings are favourite inner-city sports. Keep your wits about you at the beaches, in the town centre and any deserted spot. Oh, and don't fall for the cheap scams. The 'remember me?' scam involves someone calling out 'my friend, long time no see!', pretending they know you, then cheating you out of money. The remedy: don't respond to random calls.

## SIGHTS

Central Dakar has a few impressive colonial buildings. There's the **Gouvernance** (Map p482) and the **Chambre de Commerce** (Map p482), both on Place de l'Indépendance. The stately **Hôtel de Ville** (Town Hall; Map p482) sits right behind, and a short walk north takes you to the elegant building of the **train station**.

South of Place de l'Indépendance, the 1907 **Palais Présidentiel** (Map p482; Ave Léopold Senghor) is surrounded by sumptuous gardens. The nearby **IFAN Museum** (Map p482; Place de Soweto; adult/child US\$3.50/0.35; ☎ 8am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm) has good, though slightly dusty, displays of masks and other items from across West Africa.

The impressive **Grande Mosquée** (Map p480), built in 1964, sits in the heart of **Médina** (Map p478), a lively neighbourhood where tiny tailor shops fight for space with improvised market stalls, and creative ideas brew between street cafés and makeshift football grounds. The 1864 lighthouse **Les Mamelles** (Map p478) sits further north on a small volcanic hill, a peaceful spot great for views across the peninsula.

Dakar's best beaches are found in the north of the peninsula. **Plage de N'Gor** (Map p478; admission US\$1) isn't bad, but the beaches on **Île de N'Gor** (Map p478), reached by pirogue (US\$1) from there, are much nicer. Slightly eastwards, there's a fantastically wide beach near the fishing village of **Yoff** (Map p478). The stretch of beach closest to the village is quite polluted, however, with a fish market dominating most of the scene. The traditional Yoff village and its majestic **Layen Mausoleum** (Map p480), however, are well worth a visit. The residents there are noted for the strong Islamic culture. Smoking and drinking are not

allowed and visitors should be appropriately dressed (meaning long skirts for women, long trousers for men).

## ACTIVITIES

Sports-lovers are well catered for by the sublime **Piscine Olympique** (Map p478; ☎ 869 0606; piscineolymp@sentoosn; Tour de l'Oeuf) in Point E, which is part of a huge sports complex. The environmental-protection agency **l'Océanium** (Map p480; ☎ 822 2441; www.oceanium.org; Route de la Corniche-Est; ☎ Mon-Sat) runs excellent diving excursions. Surfers can hire boards (US\$18 per day), get advice on good spots, and even take courses at the **Tribal Surf Shop** (Map p480; ☎ 820 5400; tribal@arc.sn; Yoff Village).

## SLEEPING

Dakar has a range of accommodation, from filthy dosshouses to palatial hotels – although everything is expensive and the steadily increasing prices are only justified in a few places.

### Budget

**Hôtel Continental** (Map p482; ☎ 822 1083; 10 Rue Galandou Diouf; s/d from US\$25/30; ☎) With decent rooms and friendly staff, this is the best of the Dakar cheapies.

**Hôtel Mamelles** (Map p478; ☎ 860 0000; www.lesmamelles.com; 36 cité des Magistrats Ouakam; s/d US\$28/38, without bathroom US\$20/30) Tucked away in a side street in the suburb Les Mamelles, this tranquil place has colourfully decorated rooms set around a leafy patio.

**Hôtel Cap Ouest** (Map p478; ☎ 820 2469; capouest@arc.sn; s/d US\$31/37) With forthcoming management, cute sea-view rooms and a private beach thrown in, the Cap Ouest is a strong contender for best-value place on the peninsula.

### Midrange

**Hôtel Océanic** (Map p482; ☎ 822 2044; www.hotelocéanicdakar.com; 9 Rue de Thann; s/d/tr US\$42/50/64; ☎) With spotless rooms and a relaxed courtyard restaurant, this pleasant old-style place is fair value.

**Hôtel Saint-Louis Sun** (Map p482; ☎ 822 2570; fax 822 4651; Rue Félix Faure; s/d/tr US\$45/56/67; ☎) Rooms are pretty and open onto a peaceful, leafy courtyard. An oasis of peace.

**Hôtel Ganale** (Map p482; ☎ 889 4444; hganale@sentoosn; 38 Rue Assane Ndiaye; s/d US\$54/68) Never mind the gloomy lobby – rooms are bright and tastefully decorated and the bar almost funky.





## Top End

**Hôtel Sôkhamon** (Map p480; ☎ 889 7100; www.hotelsokhamon.com; cnr Blvd Roosevelt & Av Nelson Mandela; s/d US\$90/105) Dakar's most beautiful place, with stunning sea-view rooms in imaginative Arab-African design. A bargain for the quality you get.

**Novotel** (Map p482; ☎ 849 6161; novotel@sentoo.sn; Ave Abdoulaye Fadiga; r US\$165; ☎ ☎) Smooth standards, good service, bland in character – it's a Novotel alright. Big plus: it's a free wi-fi space.

## EATING

Dakar's restaurant scene unites the scents and flavours of the world, though you need a healthy budget to enter the city's places of culinary delight. If you're getting by on a few crumpled CFA notes a day, stop at the make-shift street stalls selling rice and sauce or one of the many *shwarma* (grilled meat served in bread) places feeding the capital's snack-hungry. The best-stocked supermarket is **Score** (Map p482; Ave Albert Sarraut).

**Adonis** (Map p482; Ave Pompidou; snacks around US\$2; ☎ 9am-midnight) Masses of students, workers and travellers pass through this spacious, though invariably packed fast-food place. Why? The *shwarmas* are excellent.

**Keur N'deye** (Map p482; ☎ 821 4973; 68 Rue Vincens; meals US\$5-8; ☎ lunch & dinner) This one's great for Senegalese food, plus there's occasionally live kora music.

**Chez Loutcha** (Map p482; ☎ 821 0302; 101 Rue Moussé Diop; dishes US\$5-8; ☎ 7am-11pm Mon-Sat) This inner-city place is enduringly popular, thanks to huge portions of Cap Verdean, Senegalese and European specialities.

**Le Méléa** (Map p482; ☎ 502 8293; 90 Rue Moussé Diop; dishes US\$10; ☎ lunch & dinner) This tiny French restaurant is all simple elegance, and the food, such as Moroccan couscous, tastes divine.

**La Casa Créole** (Map p482; ☎ 823 4081; 21 Blvd el Haji Djily Mbaye; meals around US\$8-12; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) On a marvellous garden terrace, French and Creole food are served with a sprinkling of live jazz.

**Mini Resto Maquis** (Map p478; ☎ 825 5573; Ave Cheikh Anta Diop; meals around US\$10-14; 11am-midnight) This Cameroonian place serves the best *atièke* (similar to couscous) with grilled fish in town. Waiting times can be painfully long, though.

**Le Sarraut** (Map p482; ☎ 822 5523; Ave Albert Sarraut; meals around US\$10-15; ☎ 8am-midnight Mon-Sat) This is a Dakar classic: the tasty French and inter-

national cuisine in this calm, central place is hard to beat.

**La Fourchette** (Map p482; ☎ 821 8887; 4 Rue Parent; meals around US\$12-20; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) This polished food temple serves impeccable sushi and scrumptious dishes from around the world. Pricey – yes, but sinfully good.

## DRINKING

**Le Mex** (Map p482; ☎ 823 6717; 91 Rue Moussé Diop; ☎ noon-2am) This colourful Mexican restaurant transforms into a lively bar at night. It's popular with the French military and their obligatory female following.

**Le Seven** (Map p482; ☎ 842 6911; 25 Rue Mohamed V) The glittering queen of Dakar's bars. So plugged-in, you risk electrocution.

**Iguane Café** (Map p482; 26 Rue Jules Ferry) The mock-military décor may be aggressive to the eye, but the atmosphere is decidedly relaxed.

**Hôtel de l'Indépendance** (Map p482; Place de l'Indépendance) The décor might be lousy, but the views from this rooftop bar in the town centre are unbeatable.

## ENTERTAINMENT

### Live Music & Nightclubs

Live-music places spring up almost daily in Dakar, and acoustic sounds are the latest trend on Dakar's restaurant scene. Nights on the dance floor start late – don't even get your kit on before 1am. And always, always overdress.

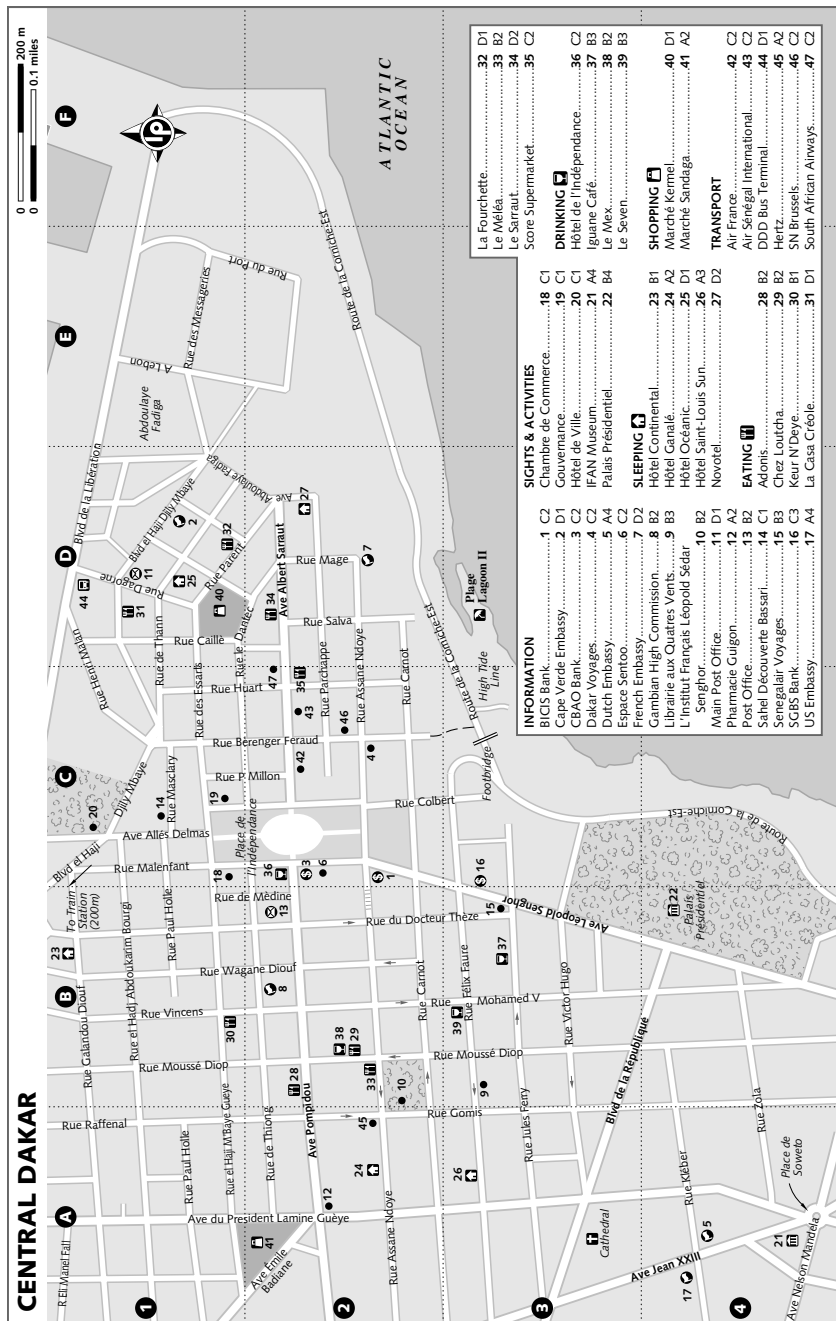
**Just 4 U** (Map p478; ☎ 824 3250; Ave Cheikh Anta Diop; ☎ 11am-3am) This spacious bar-restaurant is Dakar's best address for live music. There's a concert every night, often by one of Senegal's greatest artists.

**Pen'Art** (Map p478; ☎ 864 5131; Blvd du Sud; ☎) Around the corner from Just 4 U, this is a cosy jazz club with good bands in a relaxed atmosphere.

**Kilimanjaro** (Map p478; ☎ 822 6991; Soumbédioune) The mighty Thione Seck plays here, at his personal club, every Friday. A fabulous place with a friendly ambience. Dress smart.

**Thiossane** (Map p478; ☎ 824 6046; Sicap Rue 10) Whenever Youssou N'Dour is in town, his famous nightclub turns on the lights and becomes the hub of the hip-swaying, high-heeled *mbalax* scene.

**Casino du Cap Vert** (Map p478; ☎ 820 0974) Utterly popular, this stylish place is on the route to the airport, and a good place to spot famous singers and footballers.



**Senat** (Map p478; ☎ 869 6969; Hotel Meridien President, Pointe des Almadies) Favourite hang-out and hunting ground of the Dakarois jet set and the French 'upper class'.

## Spectator Sports

**Stade Iba Mar Diop** (Map p480; Ave Cheikh Anta Diop, Médina) Traditional Senegalese wrestling matches (*les luttes*) are held most weekends during the dry season at this stadium. The ambiance of sweaty excitement, shrill singing and furious drumming is electrifying.

## SHOPPING

Dakar's markets are among the city's biggest attractions. Come with plenty of time, patience to deal with the hustlers, and your bargaining spirits switched on. The cute, covered Marché Kermel (Map p482) has a good selection of souvenirs, as does the Village Artisanal (Map p478), Dakar's classic place for masks and wooden statues. If it's African cloth you're after, Marché HLM (Map p478) is your address.

**Marché Sandaga** (Map p482; cnr Ave Pompidou & Ave du President Lamine Guèye) In the endless sprawl of street stalls here you can buy about anything, as long as no one steals your purse.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

### Air

Dakar's Léopold Sédar Senghor International Airport is likely to be moved to a new location near Thiès in the coming years. Until then, all international flights will still arrive here, a mere 30-minute drive from the centre of Dakar (see p496 for details on flight connections).

Most airline offices and travel agencies are near the Place de l'Indépendance. For a full list see [www.ausenegal.com](http://www.ausenegal.com). Important ones include the following:

**Air France** (Map p482; ☎ 829 7777; 47 Av Albert Sarraut)

**Air Sénégal International** (Map p482; ☎ 804 0404; 45 Av Albert Sarraut)

**SN Brussels** (Map p482; ☎ 823 0460; Immeuble Fayçal, Rue Parchappe)

**South African Airways** (Map p482; ☎ 823 0151; 12 Av Albert Sarraut)

### Boat

The excellent ferry *Wilis* (brand new in 2005) travels between Dakar and Ziguinchor twice weekly in each direction. See p492.

## Local Transport

Road transport for long-distance destinations leaves from Gare Routière Pompiers off Ave Malik Sy (a taxi from Place de l'Indépendance should cost around US\$3). To Ziguinchor costs about US\$15 by *sept-place* (Peugeot 504 with 'seven seats') taxi (six to 10 hours, depending on the speed of the Gambia crossing). *Sept-place* taxis/minibuses go to Mbour (US\$3), Kaolack (US\$5), Saint-Louis (US\$7), Tambacounda (US\$15), and Karang (US\$9) at the Gambian border.

## Train

Dakar's train station is 500m north of Place de l'Indépendance. For more information on Senegal's main train service – the connection between Dakar and Bamako (Mali) – see the Transport section on p496.

## GETTING AROUND

### Bus

Dakar's **Dakar Dem Dikk** (DDD; [www.dakardemdikk.com](http://www.dakardemdikk.com)) bus network is a fabulous thing. Buses are modern, reliable and regular; tickets cost between US\$0.30 and US\$0.40. Check the website for a detailed list of DDD routes.

More frequent but less user-friendly are the white Ndiaga Ndiaye minivans and the blue-yellow *cars rapides*, Dakar's battered, crammed and dangerously driven symbols of identity. They are eventually supposed to be replaced by the pretty, blue-white Senbuses. These are reliable, clean and display their destinations clearly, but still only cover a few routes.

## Car

Car rental is only an option if you're in a spending mood, and if you feel brave enough to plunge into the chaotic Dakar traffic.

The major self-drive car-hire agencies in Dakar include the following:

**Avis** (Map p478; ☎ 849 7757; [www.cfaogroup.com](http://www.cfaogroup.com)) At the airport and the Hôtel Meridien President.

**Budget** (Map p480; ☎ 822 2513; cnr Ave du President Lamine Guèye & Ave Faidherbe) Also at the airport and the Hôtel Meridien President.

**Hertz** (Map p482; ☎ 820 1174; [www.hertz.sn](http://www.hertz.sn); Rue Gomis) Also at the airport.

## Taxi

Taxis are by far the easiest way of getting around town. Rates need to be fiercely negotiated before stepping into the cab. A short trip around the town centre should cost around

US\$1.50. From the centre of Dakar to the suburbs of Point E and Mermoz, you're likely to pay around US\$3, and up to US\$5.50 if travelling to Yoff and N'Gor.

The official taxi rate for trips from Léopold Sédar Senghor International Airport into the city centre is US\$6, though you're unlikely to get there for under US\$8 to US\$10. If you haul your luggage to the main road outside the airport and stop a passing cab, you can save a couple of CFA.

## AROUND DAKAR

### ÎLE DE GORÉE

The historical Île de Gorée is enveloped by an almost eerie calm. There are no sealed roads and no cars on this island, just narrow alleyways with trailing bougainvillea and colonial brick buildings with wrought-iron balconies. But Gorée's calm is not so much romantic as meditative, as the ancient buildings bear witness to the island's role in the Atlantic slave trade.

Gorée is tiny, and can easily be explored independently, though the **Syndicat d'Initiative** (☎ 823 9177; Rue du Port; ☞ 9am-1pm & 2.30-5pm Tue-Sun) can arrange guides. For some quick, on-the-spot information, try the small tourist booth near the police station. This is also where you'll have to pay your US\$1 tourist tax, an obligatory payment for all non-Senegalese visitors. Gorée has a post office and an internet café, **Espace Multimedia** (per hr US\$1; ☞ 10am-1pm & 3-10pm).

### Sights & Activities

Gorée is sadly famous for its role in the Atlantic slave trade. Though the number of slaves shipped from here was relatively small, it was a place where much of the trade was orchestrated. The **Maison des Esclaves** (Slave House; admission US\$0.60; ☞ 10.30am-noon & 2.30-6pm Tue-Sat) with its famous doorway is an important monument to the inhumanity of the slave trade. The excellent **IFAN Historical Museum** (admission US\$0.40; ☞ 10am-1pm & 2.30-6pm Tue-Sat), in the Fort d'Estrées at the north end of the island, and the **Musée de la Femme** (admission US\$0.60; ☞ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun) are also excellent historical museums.

### Sleeping & Eating

As you come off the ferry you'll see several small bars and restaurants around the small port. These all serve meals for around US\$7.

**Auberge Keur Beer** (☎ /fax 821 3801; keurbeergie@yahoo.fr; s/d US\$40/50) This welcoming place has comfortable double rooms complemented by helpful management.

**Hostellerie du Chevalier de Boufflers** (☎ 822 5364; goreeboufflers@arc.sn; www.boufflers.com; r from US\$35) This classic place is best known for its sea-view restaurant, but has also good accommodation. Best are the tastefully decorated rooms upstairs that sleep up to five.

### Getting There & Away

The Dakar-Gorée ferry (US\$10 return ticket, 20 minutes) leaves every one to two hours from the dock area between 6am and 11pm.

### LAC ROSE

This lake on the Cap Vert Peninsula owes its name to its pink colouring caused by its high mineral and salt content. It's popular with tour groups, their faithful souvenir sellers and Dakarois weekenders, and has achieved notoriety in modern times as the terminus of the annual Dakar Rally.

The **Bonaba Café** (☎ 638 7538; r per person US\$10; ☞) is an enduring favourite with independent travellers. Hidden away on the far side of the lake, it has simple rooms with shared bathrooms. You get here either by walking 2km from the main hotel cluster through the dunes, or by taking a pirogue from the salt village (US\$6 to US\$10).

**Ma Petite Camargue** (☎ 511 2745; s/d US\$30/40) is a basic *campement* (guesthouse) on the road to Bombilor, at a relaxing distance from the tourist hub. Its enterprising managers also have several houses for hire.

Trying to get here by public transport involves a journey by minibus, *car rapide* (minibuses; US\$0.40) or DDD bus 11 to Keur Massar; from there it's a 5km walk to the lake. It's much easier to hire a taxi (round trip with an afternoon waiting time around US\$40) or join an organised excursion from Dakar.

## NORTHERN SENEGAL

### SAINT-LOUIS

pop 148,000

With its crumbling colonial architecture, horse-drawn carts and peaceful ambiance, West Africa's first French settlement has a unique historical charm. The old town centre sits on an island in the Senegal River, but the

city sprawls onto the mainland of Sor and the Langue de Barbarie, where you find the lively fishing community of Guet N'Dar.

The island is reached via the 500m-long Pont Faidherbe, originally built to cross the Danube (as legend has it) but shipped here in 1897.

## Information

**BICIS** (☎ 961 1053; Rue de France; 🕒 7.45am-12.15pm & 1.40-3.45pm Mon-Thu, 7.45am-1pm & 2.40-3.45pm Fri)  
For cash withdrawals and changing money.

**CBAO** (☎ 961 9639; Rue Khalifa Ababacar Sy; 🕒 8.15-5.15pm Mon-Fri) For cash withdrawals and changing money.

**Espace Sentoo** (Bvd Abdoulaye Mar Diop; per hr US\$0.80) One of several internet cafés.

**Sahel Découverte Bassari** (☎ 961 5689; [www.saheldecouverte.com](http://www.saheldecouverte.com); Ave Blaise Diagne) This travel agency is almost an historical institution, with a packed catalogue of tours around Northern Senegal.

**Syndicat d'Initiative** (☎ 961 2455; Rue Milles Lacroix)  
The tourist office here is fantastically helpful and great for arranging tours.

## Sights & Activities

In the centre of the Saint-Louis island is **Place Faidherbe** and the **Governor's Palace**. It's flanked north and south by the 1837 **Rognât Casernes** as well as by other essentially intact 19th-century houses.

At the southern tip of the island is a **museum** (☎ 961 1050; admission US\$1; ☞ 9am-noon & 3-6pm), which contains some fascinating old photos of Saint-Louis and other exhibits relating to the northern region. **Galerie Mame Thiouth** (☎ 961 3611; ☞ 8am-7pm) usually has excellent contemporary exhibitions, beautifully displayed under the arched ceilings of a classic Saint-Louis house.

The mainland parts of Saint-Louis have less to offer in historical architecture, but more in contemporary life. **Guet N'Dar** is a fantastically busy fishing town, where you can watch some 200 pirogues being launched into the sea every morning and returning at night.

## Festivals & Events

Saint-Louis hosts a famous **jazz festival** in May. **Les Fanals**, a historic festival of decorated lanterns, is celebrated around Christmas.





## Sleeping

**Auberge de Jeunesse** (☎ 961 2409; pisdiallo@yahoo.fr; Rue Abdoulaye Seck; dm/d US\$10/20) Yes it's possible:

a spotless, mosquito-netted, ventilated place that doesn't break the bank.

**Sunu Keur** (☎ 961 8800; chaffoisjeanjacques@yahoo.fr; s/d from US\$30/40) This calm guesthouse has beautifully decorated rooms overlooking the river in a restored colonial building.

**La Louisiane** (☎ 961 4221; [www.aubergelouisiane.com](http://www.aubergelouisiane.com); Point Nord; d/tr US\$36/50) Excellent value for money, this peaceful little place has spacious, ventilated rooms right on the river.

**Hôtel Cap Saint-Louis** (☎ 961 3909; [www.hotelcap-saintlouis.com](http://www.hotelcap-saintlouis.com); s/d US\$44/64, without bathroom US\$20/28;    ) Tastefully done up, this place sits right on the sea, and has one of the best swimming pools around. Large groups or families can rent five-bed bungalows (US\$84).

**Hôtel Sindone** (☎ 961 4244; [www.hotelsindone.com](http://www.hotelsindone.com); Quai Henri Jay; s/d from US\$52/60; 🍷) A faint pink 'n' fluffy honeymoon feel scents the air of this stylish and airy hotel on the south side of the island. River views cost US\$6 extra.

**Hôtel de la Résidence** (☎ 961 1260; hotresid@sentoosn; Ave Blaise Diagne; s/d US\$52/66; 🍷) One of Saint-Louis' classic hotels, this place has comfortable rooms, evocative décor and one of the town's best restaurants.

**La Maison Rose** (☎ 938 2222; [www.lamaisonrose.net](http://www.lamaisonrose.net); Ave Blaise Diagne; s/d/ste from US\$90/110/150) Every room in this beautifully restored and exquisitely furnished house is unique, though they all exude a spirit of old-time comfort.

## Eating

**Aux Délices du Fleuve** (☎ 961 4251; Quai Roume; snacks around US\$2; ☒ lunch & dinner) Saint-Louis' famous patisserie lives up to its reputation, serving delicious pastries, ice creams and rich, milky coffees.

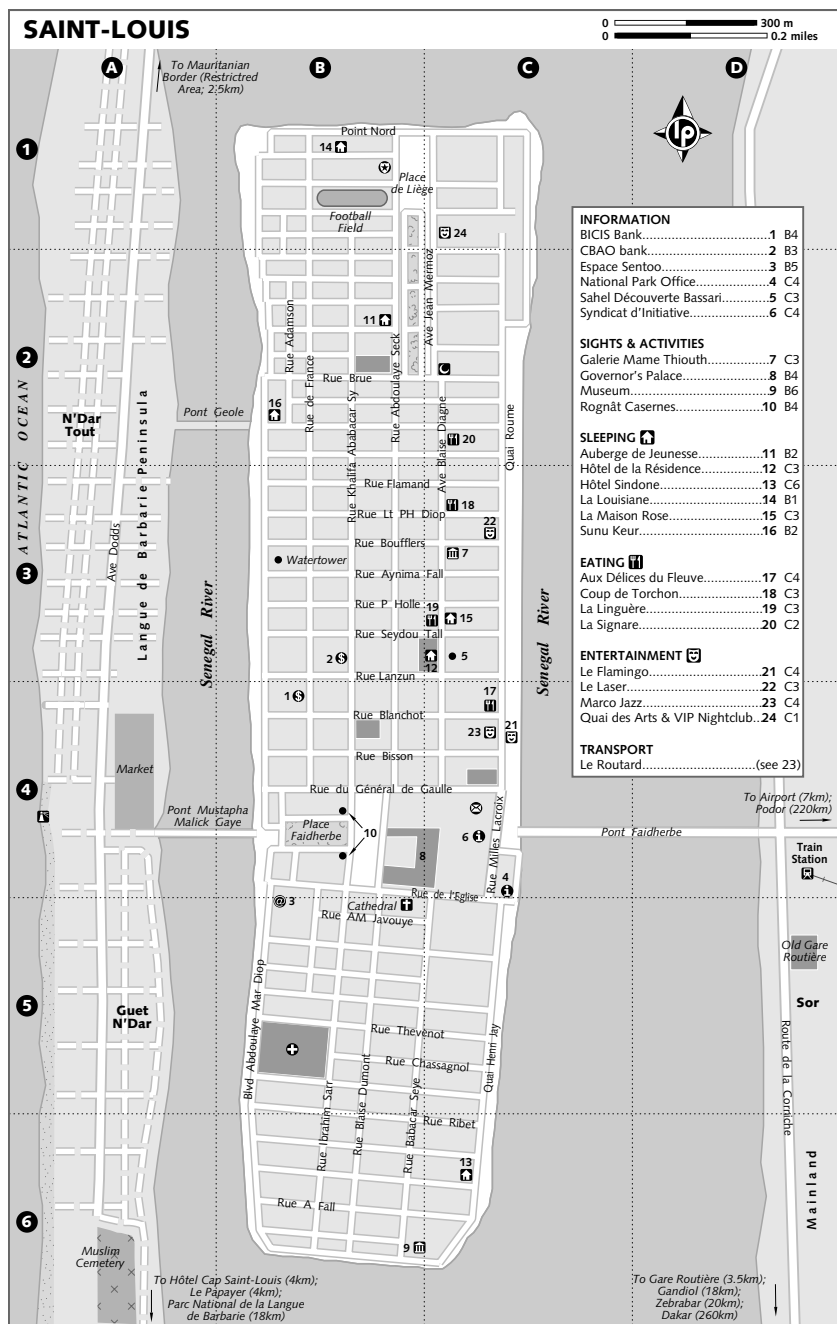
**La Linguère** (☎ 961 3949; Av Blaise Diagne; meals US\$4; ☑ lunch & dinner) Never mind the shoddy interior, the *yassa poulet* of this place is almost unbeatable.

**Coup de Torchon** (☎ 518 5408; Ave Blaise Diagne; meals US\$7-10; ☑ lunch & dinner) This friendly restaurant is the perfect place to spend long evenings chatting over huge plates of food. There's live music on Thursdays.

**La Signare** (☎ 961 1932; Av Blaise Diagne; meals CFA7000; ☑ lunch & dinner Thu-Tue) La Signare offers a truly top-notch *menu du jour* in a restored old-style building.

## Entertainment

Saint-Louis has a fine selection of nightclubs and live-music bars.



**Le Laser** (☎ 961 5398; www.casinolaser.com; Quai Roume; admission US\$4; ☎ 7pm-3am Wed-Sun) Part of the Saint-Louis Casino complex. Popular.

**Le Papayer** (☎ 961 8687; Carrefour de l'Hydrobase; ☎ noon-midnight) Has the best dance floor on the Langue de Barbarie. It's to the south, near Hôtel Cap Saint-Louis.

**Marco Jazz** (☎ 654 2442; benedettoma@yahoo.fr; Quai Roume) For live concerts, try this intimate venue where the big jazz names often give impromptu concerts during the jazz festival.

**Le Flamingo** (☎ 961 1118; Quai Roume; meals US\$10; ☎) This classy restaurant turns into an up-market bar at night, and often has quality concerts.

**Quai des Arts & VIP Nightclub** (☎ 961 5656; Ave Jean Mermoz) Saint-Louis' main live venue, and comes with a nightclub that attracts a stylish crowd.

## Getting There & Away

There are frequent *sept-place* taxis between Dakar and Saint-Louis (US\$7, five hours, 264km). You'll be dropped off at the *gare routière* (bus station), 4.5km south of Saint-Louis. A taxi to the island costs US\$1.

## PARC NATIONAL DE LA LANGUE DE BARBARIE

This **national park** (admission US\$4; pirogue for 1 or 2 people US\$15, each extra person US\$5; ☎ 7am-7pm), 20km south of Saint-Louis, covers the southern tip of the Langue de Barbarie Peninsula and a section of the mainland on the other side of the river's mouth. It's a great place for pirogue tours, and a bird-watcher's paradise.

There are three *campements* that provide meals, transfers and offer a range of activities, including sailboarding, kayaking and bird-watching. On the mainland, the brilliant *campement Zebrabar* (☎ 638 1862; www.come.to/zebrabar; camping per person US\$5, s/d US\$14/30; ☎) has simple huts and spacious bungalows spread over a huge terrain. At the ultrareaxed *Campement Océan et Savane* (☎ 637 4790; r with half/full board US\$30/42) you can stay in Mauritanian-style bungalows or rustic log cabins that house one to five people (US\$60). *Campement Langue de Barbarie* (☎ 961 1118; s/d with half board US\$52) has pretty cottages at the southern end of the peninsula.

To get here, take a taxi from Saint-Louis to Gandiol lighthouse (US\$6). From there, you cross with a pirogue. Organised tours from Saint-Louis are another option. If you're staying at any of the *campements*, phone them, and they'll arrange pick-up in Saint-Louis.

## PARC NATIONAL DES OISEAUX DU DJOUDJ

With almost 300 species, this 16,000-hectare **park** (☎ 968 8708; admission US\$4, plus pirogue US\$7; ☎ 7am-dusk Nov-May) is one of the most important bird sanctuaries in the world. Flamingos, pelicans and waders are most plentiful, as well as large numbers of migrating birds that travel here every November to escape the European winter months. The park is best explored by pirogue. Boats trips can be arranged at the park entrance or at the hotels.

One sleeping option is the **Station Biologique** (☎ 968 8708; dpnsbpnod@sentoos.sn; r per person with full board US\$30). The basic, clean rooms are intended for researchers, though tourists can be accommodated if there's space. At the park entrance, **Hotel du Djoudj** (☎ 963 8702; huts d/tr US\$30/40, rooms d/tr US\$42/67; ☎ 1 Nov-31 May; ☎) has bright, comfortable rooms and helpful staff. You can arrange boat rides around the park and hire bicycles (half-/full day US\$6/12).

The park is 25km off the main road, and there's no public transport. You can either negotiate a private taxi from Saint-Louis (around US\$40), or join an organised tour (around US\$50 per person). See p485 for tour operators.

# CENTRAL SENEGAL

## KAOLACK

Kaolack is a bustling market town and transport hub. This is a city that walks with the shrewd confidence of a street kid. A city that's not eager to please anyone, but that's welcoming all the same – in a hot and dusty sort of way.

The CBAO and SGBS banks have ATMs, and there's a fairly well-equipped hospital.

Worth a visit are the beautiful Moroccan-style **mosque** and the **covered market** (one of the largest of its kind on the continent). You should also stop in at the **Alliance Franco-Senegalaise** (☎ 941 1061; Rue Gallieni) to admire its fantastic décor or just have a tranquil cup of coffee.

If you're on a budget, the **Djolof Inn** (r US\$20; ☎), a clean and friendly place near the Gare Routière Dakar, is your best option. **Hôtel de Paris** (☎ 941 1019; Rue Gallieni; s/d US\$47/60; ☎) has a worn-out charm, and the smartest place in town is **Le Relais** (☎ 941 1000; Plage de Kundam; s/d US\$44/52; ☎), a sparkling, upmarket place



where bright rooms come with TV and internet connection.

For cheap *shwarmas*, snacks and local meals, **Chez Maty** (☎ 941 9000; Rue Cheikh Tidiane Cherif; mains US\$5; ☎ Mon-Sat), is a good address. **Le Brasero Chez Anouar** (☎ 941 1608; Av Valdiodio Ndiaye; meals US\$6; ☎ 7am-11pm) is a bustling oasis in an urban desert, a place where the latest travel information is thrown in free with hearty meals.

Transport towards Dakar (US\$5, three hours, 192km) and other western and northern destinations leaves from the Gare Routière de Dakar on the northwestern end of town. *Sept-place* taxis to Tambacounda (US\$10, 5 hours, 275km), Karang (US\$4.50, two hours) and other southern destinations leave from Garage Nioro (Sud), on the southeastern side of town.

## TAMBACOUNDA

The junction town Tambacounda is all about dust, sand, sizzling temperatures and lines of traffic heading in any direction of the country. It's a jumping-off point for Mali, Guinea, Gambia and, closer to home, the Parc National du Niokolo-Koba.

**Bloc Gadec** (☎ 531 8931; r per person US\$6) is a friendly hostel in the centre of town with clean rooms and shared toilets. The simple but charming **Hôtel Keur Khoudia** (☎ /fax 981 1102; Blvd Demba Diop; s/d US\$23/32; ☎) has spotless bungalows at decent prices, and helpful management. The Hotel Simenti in Niokolo-Koba is run by the same family, so you're in perfect hands if you're intending to visit the park. **Le Relais de Tamba** (☎ 981 1000; www.relaishorizons.net; s/d/tr US\$42/52/71; ☎) is the best choice in the midrange bracket: comfortable, friendly and almost luxurious.

For a good local meal, try **Le Relais du Rais** (☎ lunch & dinner), near the train station, where excellent local dishes cost only US\$1. **Bar-Restaurant Chez Francis** (☎ 643 1231; Av Senghor; meals US\$8; ☎ 11am-midnight) is popular with tourists and expats thanks to hearty meals and a lively ambience. For gigantic burgers and fries try **Best Burger** (☎ 981 3203; Blv Demba Diop; ☎ 11am-1am).

If you're travelling on to Mali, you get your *sept-place* taxi to Kidira at the *gare routière* on the eastern side of town (US\$10, three hours). Vehicles to most other destinations go from the larger *gare routière* on the southern side of town.

By train, there is a twice-weekly service to/from Dakar and to/from Bamako in Mali. The fare to Dakar is US\$25/20 in 1st/2nd class.

## PARC NATIONAL DU NIOKOLO-KOBA

Niokolo-Koba, at 900 sq km, is Senegal's largest national park, a World Heritage Site and an international biosphere reserve. The park's most impressive inhabitants – elephants, lions and leopards – usually remain hidden from sight. You're more likely to spot hippos, crocodiles, waterbuck, buffaloes, monkeys, warthogs, and hartebeest. And of course many of the hundreds of bird species that live here.

The best place to observe animals is the area around Simenti. This is fairly easy to reach. For all other areas, you need to hire a 4WD.

The park is officially open from 15 December to 30 April, as most areas are inaccessible during the wet months. The entrance fee (adults/children US\$4/free, vehicle US\$10) gives you access for 24 hours. Trained and approved guides can be hired at the gate or Simenti (US\$12 per day).

The basic **Dar Salam Campement** (☎ 981 2575; camping per tent US\$7, d/tr US\$27/31) at the park entrance has clean bungalows with bathrooms and a restaurant (dishes US\$7). Most people stay at **Hôtel de Simenti** (☎ 982 3650; s/d US\$30/40; ☎) inside the park. It's a concrete monstrosity, but one that sits in a prime spot in the park overlooking the river. The busiest animal sites are close to here. There's a transfer between Hôtel Keur Khoudia (see left) in Tambacounda and Hôtel de Simenti (US\$115).

You need a vehicle to enter the park. It's best to hire a taxi (around US\$70 to US\$80) or 4WD (US\$115 to US\$130) in Tamba. Enquire at the *gare routière*, at Hôtel Keur Khoudia or at the **park headquarters** (☎ 981 1097; ☎ 7.30am-5pm) in Tambacounda about car hire.

If you rely on public transport, take a Ke-dougou minibus from Tamba (US\$9) and get off at the Dar Salam park entrance. From there, you can call Hôtel de Simenti, who'll have someone pick you up (US\$50).

## PETITE CÔTE & SINÉ-SALOUM DELTA

The 150km Petite Côte stretches south from Dakar and is one of Senegal's best beach areas. Where the Siné and Saloum Rivers meet the tidal waters of the Atlantic Ocean, the coast is broken into a stunning area of mangrove

swamps, lagoons, forests and sand islands. It forms part of the magnificent 180-sq-km Siné-Saloum Delta.

## MBOUR & SALY

Eighty kilometres south of Dakar, Mbour is the main town on the Petite Côte, though the nearby Saly, a strip of big ocean-front hotels, is the heavier weight when it comes to tourism.

Mbour has a vibrant fishing industry, and the busy fish market on the beach is a sight to behold. The hotel **Village Petit Eden** (☎ 957 4477; www.petit-eden.de; d US\$34) has clean, pretty bungalows in a leafy garden setting. To stay in style, try the luxurious **Tama Lodge** (☎/fax 957 0040; www.tamalodge.com; s/d from US\$60/120), where giant wooden sculptures watch over modern mud huts.

If it's a beach holiday you're after, then Saly is the perfect corner for soaking up the sun and sipping cocktails. For a pampered holiday, the **Espadon** (☎ 957 1949; half board per person US\$70; ☺ ☺ ☺) is almost unbeatable: a smoothly decorated place that provides luxury with an African flavour. Much calmer are the places in the less touristy part of town (Saly-Niakhniakhale). The Mediterranean-style **La Medina** (☎ 957 4993; lamedina@sentoo.sn; s/d US\$26/35; ☺ ☺) stretches over three floors, surrounding a lush courtyard. **Au Petit Jura** (☎ 957 3767; www.aupetitjura.ch; d US\$40; ☺ ☺ ☺) is a pretty retreat with spotless huts set around a swimming pool.

To take a bush taxi from Mbour to Dakar will cost you US\$3.50, and from Mbour further down the Petite Côte, to Joal-Fadiout, it's US\$2.

## JOAL-FADIOUT

The twin villages of Joal and Fadiout are located south of Mbour at the end of the tar road. Joal sits on the mainland, while Fadiout is on a small island made of oyster- and clamshells, reached by an impressive wooden bridge.

The relaxed *auberge* **Le Thiouraye** (☎ 515 6064; s/d US\$20/24) sits right on the riverside, and has a brilliant terrace restaurant from where you can leap straight into a pirogue to Fadiout – a useful way to avoid the hustlers that hover around near the bridge. The fairly new **Hôtel de la Plage** (☎ 957 6677; hakim@yahoo.fr; d/tr US\$50/55; ☐ ☺) has bright, large rooms at reasonable rates and a good restaurant.

## PALMARIN & DJIFER

Palmarin, with its soft lagoons, tall palm groves and labyrinthine creeks is one of Senegal's secretly most beautiful spots. It's much better than the rubbish-ridden Djifer slightly further south. However, Djifer is the place to catch your pirogue for a trip around the mangroves of Siné-Saloum (around US\$50 per half-day).

Palmarin has a seductively good choice of *campements*. The **Yokam** (☎ 936 3974; yokam@teranga-horizon.com; r per person US\$14) is run by a young and enthusiastic bunch and has accommodation in comfy straw huts. The red-mud structure of **Lodge de Diakhakor** (☎ 644 9491, 957 1256; www.lesenegal.info; s/d with half board US\$46/82) is a stylish place where pirogue excursions, horse riding, bicycle and fishing trips are all included in the price. At **Lodge des Collines de Niassam** (☎ 669 6343; www.niassam.com; half board per person from US\$72; ☺ ☺) you can sleep in classy tree houses that cling to the mighty branches of baobabs, or sit on stilts in the river.

Palmarin is most easily reached from Mbour, via Joal-Fadiout and Sambadia (where you may have to change). The fare from Joal to Sambadia is US\$1 in a minibus, and from Sambadia to Palmarin it's US\$0.70.

## NDANGANE & MAR LODJ

Ndangane is a thriving traveller centre from where you can take a pirogue to almost any point in the delta.

**Le Barracuda** (Chez Mbacke; ☎ 658 5794; s/d US\$18/24) is not only conveniently located near the beach where you get your pirogue to Mar Lodj, it's also a cheap and very cheerful family-run place. Another good choice is the welcoming **La Palangrotte** (☎ 949 9321; lapalang@sentoo.sn; s/d incl breakfast US\$19/24), at the exit of town, where 10% of all profits are invested in local-development projects.

Mar Lodj has a range of good-value *campements*. **Le Limboko** (☎ 641 2253) has a few sparkling rooms, an excellent restaurant and a multilingual manager who's full of useful advice. Inquire for rates. **Essamaye** (www.senegal.com; r with full board US\$33) is equally friendly, though slightly more basic.

To get to Ndangane, take any bus between Kaolack and Mbour and alight at Ndiosomone, where minibuses shuttle to Ndangane (US\$3). The pirogue across to Mar Lodj costs about US\$0.60, but you may have to charter a boat (US\$20 to US\$60).

## TOUBAKOUTA & MISSIRAH

Toubakouta is a fantastically calm and pretty spot in the south of the Siné-Saloum Delta, and one of the country's best places for bird-watching. In town, **Keur Youssou** (☎/fax 948 7728; d/tr US\$24/30; ☹) has beautifully furnished rooms and a relaxed ambience. The most fascinating place, however, is a pirogue and donkey-cart ride away: **Keur Bamboung** (☎ 510 8013; www.oceanium.org; r with half/full board US\$4/44) is a beautiful, village-run ecolodge on the edge of a mangrove-lined island. Transport and all activities (mangrove walks, pirogue trips, canoeing, bird-watching) are included in the price.

South of Toubakouta, Missirah is the point of entry to the **Parc National du Delta du Saloum**, which encompasses woodlands, mangrove swamps and a large maritime section. You pay your admission charge of US\$4 at the office of the **eco guards** (☎ 936 3431; ☹ 9am-4pm) in Missirah. The peaceful **Gîte de Bandiala** (☎ 948 7735; www.gite.bandiala.com; r per person with half/full board US\$30/42) is the place to stay, and makes a great base for exploring the park. It's located 2km east of Missirah, down a sand path that turns off the main road just before you get to the village.

Kaolack to Toubakouta is US\$6 by *sept-place* taxi. From Toubakouta, a minibus to Missirah is US\$0.80, but it's easier to hire a taxi for US\$10.

## CASAMANCE

The Casamance is one of Senegal's most beautiful regions, with lush tropical landscapes, myriad waterways and the unique culture of the Diola, the largest ethnic group of the region. On the western coast, Senegal's finest beaches spread in a wide strip of white sand from Cap Skiring north towards the 'hip' villages of Kafountine and Abéné, only broken by a mangrove-lined delta where the Casamance River spills into the Atlantic.

Over the last decades, the region has unfortunately become better known for an ongoing separatist rebellion than its attractive landscape. At the time of writing, a peace deal signed between the Senegalese government and insurgents had calmed things down, and tourists had started returning to the region. Still – always check the latest situation before setting out.

## ZIGUINCHOR

pop 217,000

Ziguinchor is the largest town in southern Senegal, as well as the main access point for travel in the Casamance region. With its majestic houses, tree-lined streets and busy markets, this former colonial centre exudes real atmosphere.

### Information

**CBAO** (Rue de France) Try here to change or withdraw money.

**Diatla Tour International** (☎ 991 2781; aessibye@yahoo.fr; Rue du Général de Gaulle) This excellent travel agency can arrange air tickets, tours and hotel reservations.

**Hospital** (☎ 991 1154) Ziguinchor's regional hospital has an emergency department. It's south of the centre.

**SGBS** (Rue du Général de Gaulle) Change or withdraw money here.

### Sights

Central Ziguinchor has some colourful historical buildings, including the **Gouvernance** (Rue du Général de Gaulle) and the **Cathedral**. The huge *case à impluvium* of the **Alliance Franco-Sénégalaise**, with its stunning South African-Casamancais décor is a beauty worth admiring.

Heading 5km west out of town, you can walk through the vast greenness of the **Ferme de Djibelor** (☎ 991 1701; admission US\$4; ☹ 9am-6pm), which has a tropical fruit and flower garden and a crocodile farm.

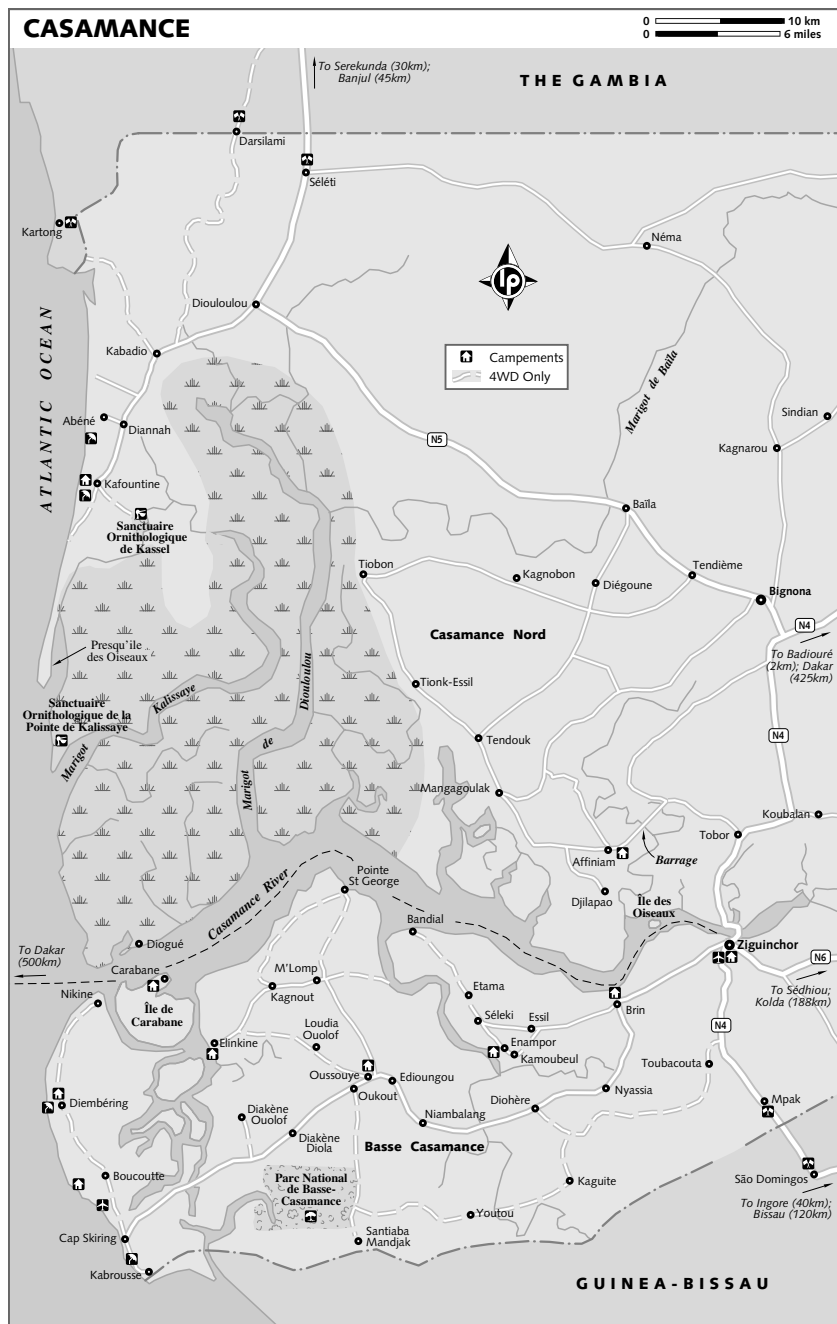
### Sleeping

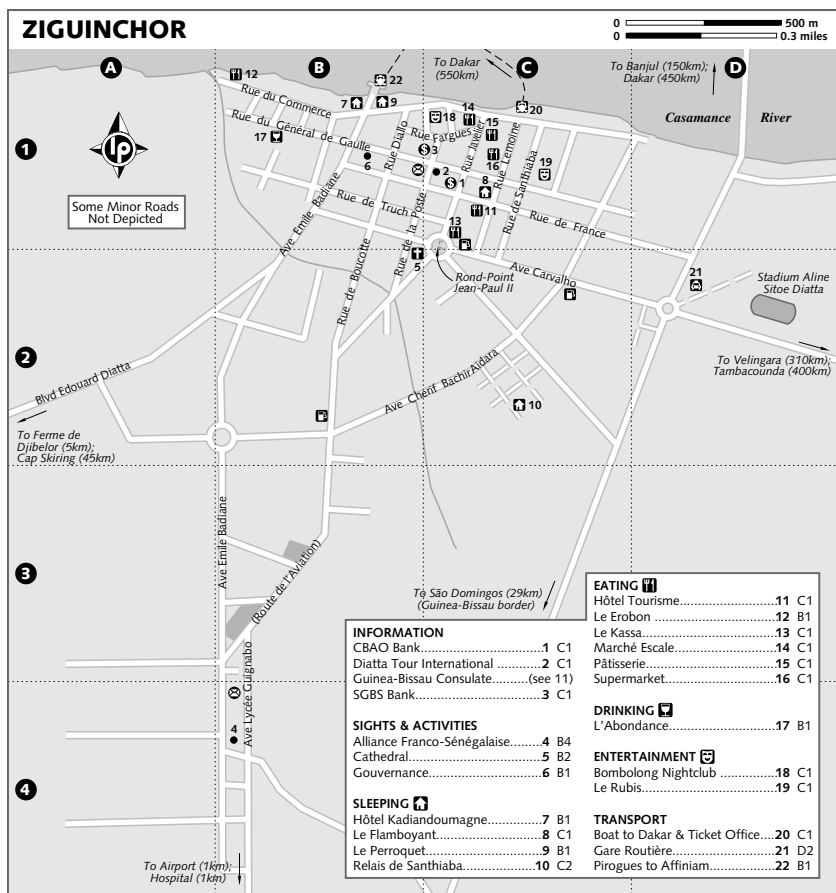
**Relais de Santhiaba** (☎ 991 1199; s/d from US\$10/16; ☹) This place looks drab from the outside, but rooms are surprisingly welcoming and facilities are clean. It's off Ave Cherif Bachir Aidara.

**Le Perroquet** (☎ 991 2329; perroquet@sentoo.sn; Rue du Commerce; s/d US\$20/24) This simple place right on the river is excellent value. Views from the 1st floor are fantastic.

**Le Flamboyant** (☎ 991 2223; flamboyant@casamance.net; Rue de France; s/d US\$30/34; ☹ ☎ ☎) This classy, garden-set place has beautiful, fully equipped rooms and, in owner Véronique Chiché, a wonderfully helpful manager.

**Hôtel Kadiandoumagne** (☎ 938 8000; www.hotel-kadiandoumagne.com; Rue du Commerce; s/d US\$44/50; ☹ ☎ ☎) Stunningly located right on the river, this top-quality, wheelchair-accessible place has spacious rooms and dazzling views from the large terrace.





## Eating & Drinking

**Le Erobon** ☎ 991 2788; Rue du Commerce; dishes US\$5; 🕒 11am-2am) This humble outdoor eatery serves a mean grilled fish in a relaxed environment.

**Hôtel Tourisme** ☎ 991 2223; Rue de France; mains around US\$6; 🕒 noon-2.30pm & 7-10pm) This simple place is great for seafood dishes and al dente spaghetti. There are also a few good, basic rooms on the first floor (s/d US\$12/16).

**Le Kassa** ☎ 936 8300; Rond-Point Jean-Paul II; dishes US\$7; 🕒 8am-2am) The most inviting of the local-style places, Le Kassa has a wide menu, a lively bar and occasional live shows on weekends.

**L'Abondance** (Rue du Général de Gaulle; 🕒 5pm-2am) Like any *dibiterie* (roast-meat stall) worth its meat, this is the popular final stop after a night out dancing.

Self-caterers can buy all the fresh fruit and vegetables they can carry at the **Marché Escal** (Rue Javelier). There's a small **supermarket** (Rue Lemoine) and a good **pâtisserie** (Rue Javelier).

## Entertainment

**Le Rubis** (Rue de Santhiaba; admission US\$2-4) A heaving club with salsa on Fridays and hip-hop vibes on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

**Bombolong Nightclub** (Rue du Commerce; admission US\$2-4) Another popular choice.

## Getting There & Around

Air Sénégal International flies regularly between Dakar and Ziguinchor (US\$100). Twice a week, there's also a safe, reliable and comfortable boat service run by the company

**Somat** (☎ 889 8009/60; seat/bed/cabin US\$30/46/55). You buy your ticket at the port.

The *gare routière* is 1km east of the city centre. To Dakar, there are frequent *sept-place* taxis (US\$15, nine hours, 454km) and minibuses (US\$10, 11 hours). A *sept-place* taxi to Cap Skiring is US\$3, a minibus US\$2.

To get anywhere around town by private taxi costs US\$0.80.

## AFFINIAM

On the north bank of the Casamance River, Affiniam is stunningly located between forest and river. The **campement villageois** (☎ 508 8025, téléc. 936 9619) is in a beautiful *case à impluvium* (large round hut with a hole in the roof to collect rainwater) on the edge of the village, watched over by giant fromager trees.

From Ziguinchor, Affiniam is best reached by pirogue (US\$0.80, 1½ hours, daily except Thursday and Sunday). Hiring a boat will cost around US\$50, hiring a taxi from Ziguinchor US\$30 (one hour, 30km).

## OUSSOUYE

Roughly halfway between Ziguinchor and Cap Skiring, relaxed Oussouye is the main town in the Basse Casamance. For the local Diola population this town is of significance, as it's home to an animist king who is often sought for advice.

Bikes can be hired at **Casamance VTT** (☎/fax 993 1004; <http://casavtt.free.fr>; half-day US\$8).

The **Campement Villageois d'Oussouye** (☎ 993 0015; <http://campement.oussouye.org>; s/d US\$9/12) is entirely constructed in the mud-architecture once typical of the region. Rooms here are excellent, and the resident guide Jean Baptiste is deeply familiar with the region. At **Campement Emanaye** (☎ 993 1004; [emanaye@yahoo.fr](mailto:emanaye@yahoo.fr); s/d US\$9/12) you'll find another striking two-storey mud dwelling that features great views over the local rice fields.

All bush taxis between Ziguinchor and Cap Skiring pass through Oussouye (US\$2).

## AROUND OUSSOUYE

### Enampor

This remote village, 23km from Ziguinchor, has an impressive **Campement Villageois** (☎ 441 4484; r per person US\$6), set in a huge *case à impluvium*.

In theory, there are two minibuses per day running from Ziguinchor to Enampor (US\$1). Hiring a taxi will set you back around US\$18.

## Elinkine & Île de Karabane

Elinkine is a busy fishing village and a jumping-off point to the peaceful Île de Karabane, a former French trading station (1836–1900). On the island, you can still see the Breton-style church, with dusty pews and crumbling statues.

In Elinkine, the simple but charming **Campement le Fromager** (☎ 525 6401; s/d US\$6/12) offers good, basic accommodation and has in Mamadou Ndiaye a fantastically knowledgeable manager.

On Karabane, **Campement le Barracuda** (☎ 659 6001; r US\$6, with half board US\$14) has spotless rooms and a good restaurant. **Chez Helena** (☎ 654 1772; s/d US\$8/12) is a slightly more run-down, though equally friendly option. **Hôtel Carabane** (☎ 569 0284; [hotelcarabane@yahoo.fr](mailto:hotelcarabane@yahoo.fr); s/d US\$26/36), in the former Catholic mission, is the most upmarket option on the isle.

Elinkine can be reached by minibus from Ziguinchor (US\$2, two hours) or Oussouye (US\$0.60, one hour). For Karabane, take the pirogue from Elinkine (US\$2, 5 minutes, twice daily). Hiring a pirogue costs around US\$20 one way.

## CAP SKIRING

The beaches at Cap Skiring are some of the finest in Africa. Fortunately, the tourist industry that has inevitably sprung up here remains quite low-key, with a strong focus on small *campements*. Most of those are on the beach, 1km from the village, at the end of a dirt track off the Ziguinchor road.

The basic, busy and beautifully set **Campement Chez M'Ballo** (☎ 936 9102; r with/without bathroom US\$15/8) and **Campement Paradis** (☎ 993 5129; r with/without bathroom US\$24/12; ☺) are both here, as is the stylish **Villa des Pêcheurs** (☎ 993 5253; [www.villadespecheurs.com](http://www.villadespecheurs.com); s/d from US\$26/30; ☺), renowned for its fishing excursions and seafood restaurant.

In Cap Skiring village, the tasteful **Auberge le Palmier** (☎ 993 5109; d US\$20; ☺) and polished, river-view hotel **Les Paletuviers** (☎ 993 5210; [www.hotel-kaloo.com](http://www.hotel-kaloo.com); r incl breakfast US\$30; ☺ ☺) are good options. If you want to splash out, try the luxurious **Hôtel la Paillote** (☎ 993 5151; [www.paillote.sn](http://www.paillote.sn); s/d US\$100/145; ☺ ☺ ☺ ☺).

Cap Skiring has plenty of good restaurants. In the village, **Le Carpe Rouge** (☎ 993 5250; meals US\$2) has tasty Senegalese meals and **Le Djembe** (☎ 533 7692; dishes US\$8) serves mouth-watering French and Italian dishes with a dash of live

jazz. The lively *dibiterie* **Le Kassala** (☎ 653 0382; ☎ 8pm-4am) is the place danced-out clubbers head to for delicious roast meat (US\$10 per kilo). Combine a visit here with a night out at the stylish disco **Case Bambou** (☎ 993 5178; admission US\$2) or the more down-to-earth **Kas-soumaye** (admission US\$1.50).

From December to April, Air Sénégal International flies to Cap Skiring from Dakar for US\$120 one way. *Sept-place* taxis and minibuses (US\$3) regularly ply the route between Ziguinchor and Cap Skiring.

## AROUND CAP SKIRING

### Boucotte

A brief and bumpy taxi ride from Cap Skiring, Boucotte has a much more local feel, a seemingly endless stretch of white beach, and excellent accommodation in the pretty blue bungalows of **Oudja Hôtel** (☎ 991 2781, 517 5895; s/d/tr US\$20/24/30), right on the shoreline.

Hiring a taxi from Cap Skiring to Boucotte should cost you around US\$6, though the hotel can arrange pick-up.

## KAFOUNTINE & ABÉNÉ

Favourites with dreadlock-sporting *djembe* (drum) players and reclusive bird-watchers, these two villages feature highly among the most laid-back places on the planet.

### Sleeping & Eating

Most of Kafountine's places are a couple of kilometres from the village, near the beach. Best is **Esperanto** (☎ 635 6280; esperanto@arc.sn; d US\$20), beautifully located between the beach and a creek. A little to the south, set in woodland, is the ecofriendly **Le Kelediang** (☎ 542 5385; www.senegambia.net; r per person US\$7), where the ambience is peaceful and the food is a wonder. For real Kafountinesque reggae-vibes, head for **À la Nature** (☎ 994 8524; alanature@arc.sn; r per person US\$9). Hammock-lounging obligatory.

In Abéné village is the **Campement la Belle Danielle** (☎ 936 9542; r per person US\$5), where the friendly Konté brothers also hire bikes (US\$4 per day). Abéné beach begins 2km from the village, where the lush gardens of **Le Kossey** (☎ 994 8609; r per person US\$10) begin. The place is famous for its festive New Year's drumming parties.

### Getting There & Away

From Ziguinchor, *sept-place* taxis (US\$5, three hours) run directly to Kafountine. Abéné can be

reached by any transport going to Kafountine, although the village is 2km off the main road, and the beach a further 2km walk. A private taxi from Kafountine will set you back US\$6.

# SENEGAL DIRECTORY

## ACCOMMODATION

Senegal has a very wide range of places to stay, from top-class hotels to dirty doss-houses. Dakar has the biggest choice, though you're hard-pushed to find a budget place there. Many rural areas, particularly the Casamance, have pleasant *campements* (guesthouses). All hotels and *campements* charge a tourist tax of US\$1.20 per person per night.

## BUSINESS HOURS

Most business and government offices are open 8.30am to noon and 2.30pm to 5pm Monday to Friday. Banks usually close around four in the afternoon, and only a few open Saturday mornings. Most restaurants offer lunch from noon to 2.30pm and dinner from 7pm onwards, and many are closed on Sundays.

## DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

There are two main dangers you may encounter: civil unrest in Casamance (see p490) and Dakar street crime (see p479).

At night, exercise common sense: stay away from dark alleys and the beaches. Rely on taxis and avoid wearing expensive jewellery or 'bum bags'. Women in particular should be careful if alone on the beach. Inventing a husband and wearing a wedding ring goes far in keeping unwanted attention away.

## EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

### Senegal Embassies & Consulates

**Canada** (☎ 613-0238 6392; www.ambassenecanada.org; 57 Marlborough Ave, Ottawa ON K1N)

**France** (☎ 01 44 05 38 69; www.ambassenparis.com; 22 Rue Hamelin, 75016 Paris)

**Germany** (☎ 022-821 80 08; Argelanderstrasse 3, 53115 Bonn)

**Guinea** (☎ 224-409037; Corniche Sud, Coléah, Conakry; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 1.30-5pm Mon-Fri)

**Guinea-Bissau** (☎ 245-212944; 43 Rue Omar Torrijos, Bissau; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri)

**Mali** (☎ 223-221 8273; fax 221 1780; off Blvd Nelson Mandela, Bamako; ☎ 7.30am-1pm & 1.30-4pm Mon-Fri)

**Mauritania** (☎ 222-525 72 90; Rue de l'Ambassade du Sénégal, Nouakchott)

**Morocco** (☎ 077 54171; 17 Cadi Ben Hamadi Benhadj, BP 365 Rabat)

**UK** (☎ 020-7938 4048; www.senegalembassy.co.uk; 39 Marloes Rd, London W8 6LA)

**USA** (☎ 202-234 0540; 2112 Wyoming Ave NW, Washington, DC 20008)

## Embassies & Consulates in Senegal

If you need to find an embassy that is not listed here, check [www.ausenegal.com/practique\\_en/ambassade.htm](http://www.ausenegal.com/practique_en/ambassade.htm). Most embassies close late morning or early afternoon Monday to Friday, so set off early.

**Canada** (Map p480; ☎ 889 4700; Immeuble Sorano, 4th fl, 45-47 Blvd de la République)

**Cape Verde** (Map p482; ☎ 821 1873; 3 Blvd el Haji Djily Mbaye; ☎ 8.30am-3pm Mon-Fri)

**Côte d'Ivoire** (Map p478; ☎ 869 02 70; Rue 7 X G, Point E; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 3-5pm Mon-Fri)

**France** (Map p482; ☎ 839 5100; 1 Rue Assane Ndoeye)

**The Gambia** (Map p482; ☎ 821 7230; 11 Rue de Thiong; ☎ 9am-3pm Mon-Thu, to 1pm Fri)

**Germany** (Map p480; ☎ 889 4884; 20 Ave Pasteur)

**Guinea** (Map p478; ☎ 824 8606; Rue 7, Point E; ☎ 9.30am-2pm Mon-Fri)

**Guinea-Bissau** (Map p478; ☎ 824 5922; Rue 6, Point E; ☎ 8am-12.30pm Mon-Fri; Ziguinchor (Map p492; ☎ 991 1046; Rue de France; ☎ 8am-2pm Mon-Fri)

**Mali** (Map p478; ☎ 824 6252; 23 Route de la Corniche Ouest, Fann; ☎ 8am-11am Mon-Fri)

**Mauritania** (Map p478; ☎ 822 6238; Rue 37, Kolobane; ☎ 8am-2pm Mon-Fri)

**Netherlands** (Map p482; ☎ 849 0360; 37 Rue Kléber)

**UK** (Map p480; ☎ 823 7392; 20 Rue du Dr Guillet)

**USA** (Map p482; ☎ 823 4296; Ave Jean XXIII)

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

December, May and June are the best times to stumble across music and arts festivals, including the Saint-Louis jazz festival, the

Dak'Art Biennale (visual arts festival) and Kay Fecc (famous dance festival).

**Paris-Dakar car rally** Traditionally ends at Lac Rose in the middle of January.

**Grand Magal pilgrimage & festival** Held annually 48 days after the Islamic New Year in Touba to celebrate the return from exile of the founder of the Mouride Islamic brotherhood.

## HOLIDAYS

As well as religious holidays listed in the Africa Directory chapter (p1106) the principal public holidays in Senegal are the following:

**New Year's Day** 1 January

**Independence Day** 4 April

**Workers Day** 1 May

**Assumption** 15 August

## INTERNET ACCESS

Internet cafés are plentiful, and wi-fi spaces are increasing almost daily (particularly in Dakar and Ziguinchor). Surfing costs about US\$1 per hour; wi-fi in hotel lobbies and bars is usually free (just purchase a drink).

## MAPS

The locally produced *Carte du Senegal* (1:912,000) is the most widely available, though it's a bit old.

## MONEY

The unit of currency is the West African CFA franc. Banks with ATMs are found in all larger towns across the country. Banks and exchange bureaux tend to offer similar rates; the currency most easily changed is the euro.

## POST & TELEPHONE

Senegal's postal service is reliable and inexpensive for letters.

Calls from public Sonatel offices cost about US\$1 per minute to Europe and slightly more to the USA and Australia. Rates are cheaper late at night and on the weekend. Dakar has private *télécentres*, usually open until late evening, for phone calls, telexes and faxes.

Mobile phones are easily connected to one of two local GSM networks (Alizé and Tigo) with the purchase of a SIM card. There are no area codes in Senegal.

## TIME

Senegal is at GMT/UTC, which for most European visitors means there is no or very little time difference. There is no daylight savings time.

### PRACTICALITIES

- *Focus on Africa* (BBC) often has excellent news stories on Senegal, and is sold in the country.
- If you read French, *Jeune Afrique* and *l'Intelligent* are good sources of political and cultural news.
- The electricity supply in Senegal is 220V. Plugs have two round pins, as in France and continental Europe.
- Senegal uses the metric system.



## VISAS

Visas are required by all except nationals of the EU, USA, Canada, Norway, South Africa, Israel, Japan and Ecowas (Economic Community of West African States) countries. Australians and New Zealanders require visas. Tourist visas for one to three months cost US\$15 to US\$20.

### Visas for Onward Travel

You can get visas for other African countries in Dakar. Each requires two photos. For contact details, see p495.

**The Gambia** Three-month visas cost US\$40 and take 24 hours.

**Guinea** One-month visas cost US\$40 and are normally issued in 24 hours.

**Guinea-Bissau** One-month visas cost US\$18 and are issued in 24 hours in Dakar. At the consulate in Ziguinchor they are issued on the spot for US\$10.

**Mali** One-month visas cost US\$20 and take 48 hours to issue.

**Mauritania** Three-month visas cost US\$70 and are issued the same day.

## TRANSPORT IN SENEGAL

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

#### Air

Dakar is well connected to other African capitals. Air Sénégal International has good, regular connections to Praia in Cape Verde (US\$300), Banjul (US\$300), Bissau (US\$200), Abidjan, (US\$350), Accra (US\$380) and Bamako (US\$290). Lagos is best reached by Virgin Nigeria (around US\$380). There are also good connections to Morocco (Royal Air Maroc), Algeria (Air Algérie) and Tunisia (Air Tunisia). For trips to East Africa, Kenya Airways is your best option. Trips to Nairobi cost around US\$1600, and there are good connections to Uganda and Tanzania. Ethiopian Airways has an excellent link to Addis Ababa (US\$800), and South African Airways flies to Johannesburg (US\$1300).

The tour operator **Nouvelles Frontières** (☎ in France 08 25 00 07 47; [www.nouvelles-frontieres.fr](http://www.nouvelles-frontieres.fr)) usually has cheap charter flights between Paris and Dakar.

#### Land

##### THE GAMBIA

From Dakar there are minibuses (US\$7) and *sept-place* taxis (US\$10, six hours) south to

Karang at the Gambian border (see opposite for an explanation of these transport options.) From Karang, there's frequent transport to Barra, where you take the ferry to Banjul (see p320).

From southern Senegal, *sept-place* taxis (US\$8, five hours) run regularly between Ziguinchor and Serekunda (The Gambia), and *sept-place* taxis run between Kafountine and Brikama (US\$4, two hours).

In eastern Senegal, *sept-place* taxis go from Tambacounda to Vélingara (US\$3, three hours), and then from Vélingara to Basse Santa Su (US\$2, 45 minutes, 27km).

#### GUINEA

The best place to pick up transport to Guinea is Tambacounda in eastern Senegal, where *sept-place* taxis ply the route to Labé (US\$30, 24 hours). Most traffic passes via Diaoubé (Senegal) and Koundara (Guinea), where you may have to change, and some goes via Kedougou (Senegal).

#### GUINEA-BISSAU

*Sept-place* taxis leave every morning from Ziguinchor for Bissau via the main border post at São Domingos and Incore (US\$8, six hours). The road is paved but crosses two rivers, which can cause delays; start early. Fights briefly flared up around the border crossing in early 2006; always check the latest situation before setting out.

#### MALI

A popular, though tedious, way to travel from Senegal to Mali is on the Dakar–Bamako 'express' train, which normally departs from Dakar at around 10am Saturday, and takes 48 hours to reach Bamako. From Dakar to Bamako, it's US\$68/50 in 1st/2nd class, and *couchettes* cost US\$100 per person (reserve in advance). Note that this once classic train journey has drastically deteriorated. Trains are often cancelled, or leave with a delay of several days, and derailments are frequent. Check the latest situation at the Dakar train station before setting off. Watch out for thieves on the train, especially at night.

You can also take *sept-place* taxis from Tambacounda and travel along the 180km highway to Kidira (US\$6, three hours). Crossing the bridge at Kidira leads you to Doboli, in Mali, from where bush taxis to Kayes cost from US\$4.

## MAURITANIA

*Sept-place* taxis run regularly from Dakar to the main border point at Rosso (US\$9, from Saint-Louis US\$2), a crowded, hassle-some place. If waiting for one of the four daily ferries seems too painful, travellers without vehicles can also jump onto one of the many pirogues that do the crossing. From immigration it's 500m to the *gare routière*, where bush taxis run to Nouakchott.

## GETTING AROUND

### Air

Air Sénégal International offers daily flights from Dakar to Ziguinchor (US\$71). During the high season, there are also twice-weekly flights to Cap Skiring (US\$100) and, theoretically, once-weekly flights to Tambacounda and Saint-Louis, though these services can be irregular.

## Local Transport

By far the quickest and safest way of getting around the country is by *sept-place* taxi – battered Peugeots that negotiate even the most ragged routes of the country. Slightly cheaper, but infinitely less reliable are the minibuses (Ndiaga Ndiaye or *grand car*), carrying around 30 to 40 people. Vehicles leave from the *gare routière* when they're full, and they fill up quickest in the morning, before 8am.

Taxi prices are theoretically fixed, though they're steadily increasing as petrol prices rise, and there's usually an extra, negotiable charge for luggage (about 10% of the bill).

The *car mouride* bus service (financed by the Mouride brotherhood) offers a fairly reliable, though slow, uncomfortable connection between major towns in Senegal. Book ahead of travel. In Dakar, go to the **Gare Routière Pompiers** (Map p480; ☎ 821 8585; off cnr Ave Malick Sy).